

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Fighting fire by sharing knowledge: EPO launches new platform to make innovation in this field more accessible to all**

* **Last year was one of the worst years on record for fires in Europe, with wildfire damaging more than 830 000 ha at an immeasurable human cost**
* **The European Patent Office (EPO) is announcing a knowledge-sharing platform to provide crucial information in the fight against wildfires**
* **The platform enables easy and precise navigation of information on patents**

**Munich, 23 May 2023** – Last summer, more than 830 000 ha of land across Europe was devasted by forest fires, more than ten times the area of the Black Forest. 2022 was the second worst year in Europe in terms of burnt areas and the number of fires since 2006, according to the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS). These wildfires cost the European Union 2.5 billion euros in economic damage and the human cost was immeasurable. To give just one example, fires raging for two weeks in the Gironde area of France meant nearly 40 000 people were evacuated from their homes, according to an estimate by EUMETSAT, the European operational satellite agency for monitoring weather, climate and the environment. As a result of climate change, the wildfire season is here to stay. Although Spain and Portugal have the largest burnt area in 2023 to date, France is already surpassing its annual average, according to EFFIS.

The European Patent Office (EPO) has launched a new [platform](https://www.epo.org/news-events/in-focus/firefighting.html?mtm_campaign=InF-Firefighting&mtm_keyword=InF-pressrelease&mtm_medium=press&mtm_group=InFocus) to share world-class patent knowledge and information on life- and land-saving technologies in the fight against wildfires. The initiative was created to avoid the devastation of previous years and help both local and national governments prepare. Published patents and patent applications are a valuable source of information for scientists, engineers and governments. Patent information is intelligence which tells users what inventions have already been made and this information can lead to new insights, breakthroughs and technical partnerships.

As EPO President, António Campinos, explains, “*Global success in fighting fires depends on access to the right know-how and technical information that’s contained in patents. The new platform compiles some 30 search queries, which are designed to support people, governments, scientists and engineers in rapidly accessing the most relevant and updated information in this field*”.

**Prevention, protection and restoration**

This new platform focuses on **four main chapters: detection and prevention, fire extinguishing, protective equipment and post-fire restoration.** The fire extinguishing field is currently the sector with the highest number of patent applications filed, ahead of the detection and prevention field and the protective equipment field[[1]](#footnote-2). The platform hosts a broad range of innovations, from AI and aerial technologies to virtual reality firefighting training and flame-retardant materials.

The platform, which draws data from the EPO’s public database, [Espacenet](https://worldwide.espacenet.com/), of over 140 million documents from 100 countries, provides quick access to critical information. EPO examiners have joined forces with expert patent examiners and analysts from the national patent offices of Spain, Portugal, France, Greece and Italy to compile relevant queries related to fire fighting. It is the EPO’s third such initiative, following the “[Fighting Coronavirus](https://www.epo.org/news-events/in-focus/fighting-coronavirus.html)”  and “[Clean energy technologies](https://www.epo.org/news-events/in-focus/clean-energy.html)” platforms.

**Tackling the United Nations’ sustainability goals**

In line with its commitment to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the EPO will also promote the role of intellectual property by co-organising an international conference next week with the Portuguese Institute of Industrial Property (INPI), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO). The event, [**Thinking about Industrial Property, Sustainability and the Future of the Planet**](https://inpi.justica.gov.pt/Saber-PI/Conferencia-Internacional-sobre-Propriedade-Industrial-e-Objetivos-de-Desenvolvimento-Sustentavel/Registration-SDG-Conference), will be held in Lisbon, Portugal, on 29/30 May. It will be a chance to discuss and exchange ideas on how intellectual property can incentivise and protect innovation and the work of inventors, while building a greener and fairer future.

During the conference, the EPO will present a highlight report on its patent knowledge-sharing activities linked with seven UN SDGs. The EPO has made it its core mission to provide greater access and democratise patent knowledge as patents play a crucial role in promoting innovative solutions to achieve the UN SDGs.

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**A look back at 50 years of European patents**

In 2023 the EPO celebrates the 50th anniversary of the founding of the European patent system. When 16 countries signed the European Patent Convention in Munich on 5 October 1973, they ushered in a new era of co-operation on patents. This laid the ground for a patent system supporting economic and technological developments that have shaped our lives and continue to do so today. Find out more about the [history of the EPO and the anniversary events](https://www.epo.org/about-us/50-epc-anniversary.html) planned in 2023.

**About the EPO**

With 6 300 staff members, the [European Patent Office (EPO)](http://www.epo.org/) is one of the largest public service institutions in Europe. Headquartered in Munich with offices in Berlin, Brussels, The Hague and Vienna, the EPO was founded with the aim of strengthening co-operation on patents in Europe. Through the EPO's centralised patent granting procedure, inventors can obtain high-quality patent protection in up to 44 countries, covering a market of some 700 million people. The EPO is also the world's leading authority in patent information and patent searching.

1. Patents and forest fire control, INPI [↑](#footnote-ref-2)